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PASS AGRICULTURE

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TAGS: EAGR, EC

SUBJECT: REFORM OF THE CAP - WHAT IT ENTAILS

REF: A) EC BRUSSELS 7626 B) EC BRUSSELS 4334

C) EC BRUSSELS 6270 (1973)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE OCTOBER 2 COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL MINISTERS

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CALLED FOR A COMMISSION STOCK-TAKING AND A COUNCIL DISCUSSION OF

THE EC COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) (SEE SEPTTEL). SOME SEE THIS AS A WEDGE FOR REFORM. HOWEVER, AN EFFORT TO REFORM THE CAP INVOLVES ALTERATION OF A VERY COMPLICATED COMPROMISE. THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED OVER THE YEARS, BUT UNTIL NOW REFORM HAS FOUNDERED ON THE INABILITY OF REFORMERS TO FIND PROPOSALS THAT NOT ONLY IMPROVE THE SYSTEM BUT ALSO SATISFY ALL THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS. THIS CABLE ANALYZES SOME OF THE PROBLEMS AND SOME OF THE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. INTRODUCTION: GERMANY HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT SEEKS SOME FUNDAMENTAL RESTRUCTURING OF THE CAP. THE BRITISH WOULD AGREE. MAJOR EFFORTS TO REFORM THE CAP HAVE BEEN TRIED BEFORE. MANSCHOLT'S RADICAL 1972 PROPOSALS WERE, HOWEVER, NEVER SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED, AND LARDINOIS' MORE MODEST EFFORTS LAST FALL RECEIVED LITTLE ATTENTION. FOR ITS PART, THE UNITED STATES HAS ALSO ENCOURAGED THE IDEA OF REFORM INTO THE HOPE THAT REFORM WOULD BRING GREATER ACCESS FOR OUR PRODUCTS. THE COUNCIL DECISION MEANS THERE WILL BE A REVIEW, PROBABLY BASED ON THE LARDINOIS PAPER, BUT IT WILL TAKE A LONG TIME AND WE CANNOT NOW PREDICT RESULTS.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM: THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE CAP ARE (1) COMMUNITY PREFERENCE, (2) COMMON PRICING AND FREE MOVEMENT OF PRODUCTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, AND (3) COMMON FINANCING. THE COMPROMISE ESTABLISHING THE CURRENT CAP IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS THE "ROME TREATY BARGAIN," I.E. AGRICULTURAL BENEFITS FOR FRANCE IN EXCHANGE FOR INDUSTRIAL GAINS FOR GERMANY. (IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT ITALIAN PRODUCTS WERE LONG LEFT OUT OF THE CAP.) IT ASSURED A MARKET FOR FRENCH FARM PRODUCTS. HOWEVER, THE CAP COMPROMISE INVOLVED FAR MORE THAN THAT. IT INVOLVED AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO A CONTINUATION OF THE EXISTING FARM PATTERNS. IT PERPETUATED INEFFICIENT FARMING PRACTICES BY SUBSIDIES AND OTHER INDUCEMENTS. THUS, THERE IS LITTLE MOTIVATION FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE CURRENT CAP. BY INSULATING EUROPEAN FARMERS FROM WORLD MARKETS IT BROUGHT A PRICE STABILITY WHICH THEY CONSIDER IMPORTANT. IT RESULTED IN A TRANSFER OF RESOURCES FROM URBAN TO RURAL AREAS INVOLVING NOT ONLY A WELFARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SYSTEM FOR POOR FARMERS BUT ALSO A SYSTEM OF PAYMENTS TO BIG FARMERS, WHO ARE IMPORTANT POLITICALLY. HIGH INTERNAL PRICES ALLOWED BALANCE OF PAYMENTS AND URBAN-RURAL TRANSFERS THAT WERE DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN AND THEREFORE DIFFICULT TO COMPLAIN AGAINST. THE HIGH PRICES HAVE ALSO MINIMIZED THE CONTRIBUTIONS BY NATIONAL TREASURIES BY EFFECTING A DIRECT TRANSFER FROM URBAN CONSUMERS TO RURAL PRODUCERS.

4. THE CAP IS NOT A SINGLE MONOLITHIC SYSTEM. IT CONTAINS SEVERAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS. THE SUGAR PROGRAM INVOLVES HIGH PRICES FOR CERTAIN QUANTITIES OF PRODUCTION BUT LOWER PRICES IN EXCESS OF THESE AMOUNTS. ITALY OPERATES A DEFICIENCY-PAYMENT SCHEME FOR DURUM WHEAT, IN WHICH DIRECT PAYMENTS ARE MADE TO FARMERS, AND FOR OLIVE OIL, IN WHICH DIRECT PAYMENTS ARE MADE TO CRUSHERS. HOWEVER, THE PRINCIPAL FEATURE OF THE CAP ON THE IMPORTANT GRAIN AND DAIRY PRODUCTS IS MAINTENANCE OF A HIGH TARGET PRICE BY LEVIES ON IMPORTS AND SUBSIDIES ON EXPORTS. IN RECENT YEARS THIS PRICE HAS BEEN MAINTAINED AT LOWER-THAN-WORLD MARKETS LEVELS BY EXPORT LEVIES.

5. THE COMPLAINTS: MANY ARE NOW CONVINCED THAT THE SYSTEM DOES NOT WORK. THE SYSTEM OF COMMON PRICING HAS BEEN TORPEDOED BY EXCHANGE RATE CHANGES. THE PRICING SYSTEM HAS BEEN TOO RIGID TO HANDLE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE FACT THAT MANY PRODUCTS ARE OUTPUTS FOR SOME FARMERS BUT INPUTS FOR OTHERS. THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF GRAINS AND LIVESTOCK, DAIRY AND BEEF, AND DAIRY AND VEGETABLE OILS HAVE FRUSTRATED EFFORTS TO ATTAIN DESIRED POLICY RESULTS IN INDIVIDUAL PRODUCT SECTORS. THE FINAL END PRODUCTS ON WHICH POLICY MAKERS WOULD HAVE MORE DISCRETION ARE FOR REASONS OF THEIR OWN DIFFICULT TO HANDLE. THE DAIRY SURPLUS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND TROUBLESOME. IT LED TO THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF BEEF PRODUCTION AT HIGH PRICES WHICH DISCOURAGED CONSUMPTION. BECAUSE OF THE SCARCITY OF REFRIGERATION THE EC CANNOT EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT PRICES OF MEAT WHEN IT IS IN HEAVY SURPLUS.

6. HIGH CAP PRICES DO NOT PROVIDE MUCH INCOME FOR SMALL FARMERS. THEY TAKE NO ACCOUNT OF THE NEED TO EQUATE SUPPLY AND DEMAND AND HAVE RESULTED IN GROWING SELF-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUFFICIENCY, SURPLUSES AND EXPORT SUBSIDIES. THE CONSTANT NEED FOR EXPORT SUBSIDIES HAS MADE THE CAP A VERY EXPENSIVE POLICY. EXCEPT IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, THE HIGH PRICES HAVE BURDENED THE CONSUMERS, AND THE PRINCIPAL CONSUMING COUNTRIES, GERMANY AND THE UK, BELIEVE THEY CARRY A DISPROPORTIONATE LOAD.

7. MEMBER STATES, FINDING THAT THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY WAS NOT SOLVING THEIR AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS, HAVE BEGUN A WIDER USE OF "NATIONAL MEASURES" WITHOUT SEEKING THEIR PARTNERS' APPROVAL. THESE MEASURES HAVE CONSISTED MAINLY OF SUBSIDIES TO PARTICULAR GROUPS OF PRODUCERS. THESE HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY GALLING FOR GERMANY AS THE PRINCIPAL CONTRIBUTOR TO THE EXPENSES OF THE CAP (THOUGH SHE TOO LACKS CLEAN HANDS). THEY INCREASE HER OWN

FARMERS' PRESSURE FOR NATIONAL MEASURES, THEY ENCOURAGED
SUBSIDIZED PRODUCTS IN COMPETITION WITH GERMAN PRODUCTION
AND BY INCREASING OUTPUT CONTRIBUTED TO THE NEED FOR
EXPORT SUBSIDIES.

8. POSSIBILITIES OF REFORM: THOUGH THE THEORETICAL
POSSIBILITIES FOR REFORM ARE RELATIVELY NUMEROUS, THE
PRACTICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.
IT IS NOT NOW POSSIBLE TO FORECAST ACCURATELY WHAT WOULD
BE THE RESULT OF A SERIOUS REVIEW OF THE CAP, BUT IT MAY
BE USEFUL TO LOOK AT SOME ALTERNATIVES.

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9. A PATCH WORK COMPROMISE: A COMPLETE REVISION OF THE CAP WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT WITHOUT UPSETTING MEMBER STATE GOVERNMENTS AND A NUMBER OF POLITICALLY-IMPORTANT GROUPS AND VESTED INTERESTS WITHIN THE MEMBER STATES. THE EASIEST CHANGE WOULD BE FURTHER PATCHES ON THE PRESENT STRUCTURE. ONE OF THE POSSIBILITIES WOULD BE CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT BASIC STRUCTURE BUT WITH LOWER SUPPORT PRICES. LARNINOIS' PROPOSALS OF LAST FALL (REF C)
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ESSENTIALLY AMOUNTED TO AN EFFORT TO STREAMLINE THE CURRENT SYSTEM BY CHANGING THE RELATIONSHIP OF GRAIN PRICES TO FAVOR THE PRODUCTION OF FEED GRAINS AND DISCOURAGE THAT OF WHEAT; TAXING DAIRY PRODUCERS TO REDUCE DAIRY SURPLUSES; ABOLISHING THE REGIONAL INTERVENTION PRICES FOR SOME GRAINS, ETC. THIS KIND OF APPROACH COULD ALSO INVOLVE SOME OF THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES LISTED BELOW, BUT THE PRIME PROBLEM OF SUCH AN APPROACH IS THE WETER OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLICATIONS INVOLVED IN BUILDING ON A FAULTY FOUNDATION.

10. MORE EMPHASIS ON NATIONAL SOLUTIONS: DESPITE THE CURRENT GERMAN INDIGNATION OVER "NATIONAL MEASURES" GERMANY HAS IN THE PAST IMPLIED THAT IT WOULD PREFER TO RELY LESS ON A COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND ALLOW MEMBER STATES TO TREAT THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL RURAL PROBLEMS IN THEIR OWN FASHION. THE BRITISH HAVE ALSO ENCOURAGED THE IDEA OF GREATER NATIONAL FLEXIBILITY. WITH A REDUCED RURAL POPULATION OF SMALL FARMERS, GERMANY COULD HANDLE HER OWN AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS THOUGH A NATIONAL SYSTEM AT LESS EXPENSE THAN IS NOW ENTAILED FOR HER AS THE "TREASURER" FOR THE COMMON POLICY. SHE PARTICULARLY DOES NOT WISH TO BE TREASURER FOR THE COMMON MEASURES WHEN OTHER MEMBER STATES ARE SPENDING FUNDS ON THEIR OWN NATIONAL MEASURES. HOWEVER, THE FRENCH, THE DUTCH, THE IRISH AND THE DANES AS CURRENT BENFICIARIES WOULD RESIST ANY EFFORT TO MOVE FROM A COMMON TOWARD A NATIONAL APPROACH.

11. A RETURN TO THE MARKET; NOR IS IT LIKELY THAT A REFORM OF THE CAP WOULD ENTAIL ACCEPTANCE OF "MARKET PRINCIPLES" IN THE UNITED STATES' SENSE. FARMERS' POLITICAL POWER, THE DEEP EUROPEAN DISLIKE FOR WIDE PRICE VARIATIONS, TRATIONAL SUPPORT FOR MANAGED ECONOMIS, AND THE RESISTANCE OF THE PRINCIPAL CURRENT BENEFICIARIES OF THE CAP MAKE SUCH AN APPROACH DIFFICULT TO SELL.

12. A DEFICIENCY PAYMENT SCHEME: OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR

MORE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE, ONE IN WHICH INTEREST SEEMS CONCENTRATED IS THAT OF A DEFICIENCY PAYMENT SCHEME. UNDER SUCH A SCHEME, FARMERS WOULD BE GUARANTEED A GIVEN RETURN PER UNIT OF PRODUCTION. IF THE MARKET PRICE FELL BELOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT AMOUNT, THE FARMERS WOULD RECEIVE DIRECT PAYMENT. SUCH A CHANGE WOULD APPEAL TO THE BRITISH, SINCE THIS IS BASICALLY THE SYSTEM THEY FOLLOW BEFORE 1972. PEARTY ENDORSED SUCH A SCHEME IN THE JUNE 18 SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL MINISTERS (EC BRUSSELS 4334), WHEN HE ALSO STRESSED COMPATIBILITY OF SUCH A SCHEME WITH THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE CAP. THERE ARE MANY VARIANTS ON SUCH A SCHEME, DEPENDING ON THE LEVEL OF PRICES SET. A LOW LEVEL OF PRICES WOULD FAVOR EFFICIENT PRODUCERS BUT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR HILL FARMERS, AND THEREFORE WOULD FIND RESISTANCE, PARTICULARLY IN BAVARIAN, THOUGH THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT IMPLIES THAT IT IS WILLING TO TAKE GREATER RISKS IN THIS DIRECTION THAN PREVIOUSLY, BECAUSE OF THE SHIFT IN THE POLITICAL BALANCE IN THE BUNDESTAG. THE EFFICIENT DUTCH FARMERS AND THE LARGE GRAIN PRODUCERS IN THE PARIS BASIN WOULD BE MORE LIKELY ABLE TO TOLERATE SUCH PROPOSALS.

13. WITH DEFICIENCY PAYMENT PRICES SET AT THE CURRENT CAP LEVELS, HOWEVER, SUCH A SCHEME WOULD ENTAIL VERY HIGH GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES. THE CURRENT CAP HIDES URBAN-RURAL TRANSFERS THROUGH THE MECHANISM OF HIGH PRICES. A DEFICIENCY PAYMENT SCHEME WOULD MAKE THESE PAYMENTS MORE VISIBLE, SINCE THEY WOULD APPEAR IN THE BUDGET. LARDINOIS HAS IN THE PAST OPPOSED A DEFICIENCY PAYMENT SCHEME, WHICH HE OMITTED FROM HIS MEMORANDUM OF LAST OCTOBER, BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH COST TO GOVERNMENTS. SUCH A SCHEME WOULD ALSO THROW INTO QUESTION THE WHOLE THRESHOLD PRICE MECHANISM WHICH IS TIGHTLY TIED TO INTERNAL PRICES AND IS DESIGNED TO INSULATE EC PRODUCERS FROM MORE COMPETITIVE THIRD-COUNTRY PRODUCERS.

14. STRUCTURAL REFORM-INCOME SUPPLEMENTS: THE TYPES OF REFORM LISTED ABOVE MIGHT NOT BASICALLY BE AIMED AT ALTERING THE PATTERN OF EUROPEAN FARMING. HOWEVER, JUST BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE COMMISSION, MANSCHOLT PROPOSED A PLAN INVOLVING INCOME SUPPLEMENTS WHOSE PURPOSE WAS TO EASE INEFFICIENT FARMERS OFF THE LAND. SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD BE DIRECTLY CONTRARY TO THE TENDENCY IN THE CURRENT CAP TO PRESERVE THE STATUS QUO. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS TO DO THIS. FOR EXAMPLE, (A) DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS PER UNIT OF PRODUCTION WITH LIMITS ON THE AMOUNT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANY ONE FARMER COULD RECEIVE, (B) A REVIVAL OF THE OLD FRENCH QUANTUM SYSTEM WITH DECLINING PAYMENTS FOR PRODUCTS DELIVERED OVER A TARGET QUANTITY, (C) GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOMES FOR FARMERS, ETC. SCHEMES COULD BE CONTRUCTED TO INVOLVE HEAVY EXPENDITURES OR LESS HEAVY ONES, BUT MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT ANY EFFORT TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF INCOME PAYMENTS (A) WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO POLICE, (B) WOULD INVOLVE HEAVIER GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES THAN THE CURRENT SYSTEM, AND (C) WOULD RUN INTO ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE OF THE WIDE VARIATION IN PER CAPITA FARMER INCOME WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. SOME SORT OF STRUCTURAL REFORM IS ALREADY GOING ON WITH THE CONTINUED RAPID EXODUS OF PEOPLE FROM FARMS. STRUCTURAL REFORM IS IN THE VIEW OF SOME THE ONLY WAY OF COMING TO A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION OF EUROPE'S AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, THE RESPONSES GIVEN TO MANSHOLT'S PROPOSALS DO NOT INDICATE THAT THIS IS LIKELY SOON AND WE SEE LITTLE APPETITE IN THE MEMBER STATES FOR SUCH A RADICAL PROPOSITION.

15. CONCLUSION. THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF VARIATIONS ON THESE BASIC THEMES AS DISCUSSIONS OF REFORM GET UNDER WAY. PREDICTION AT THIS POINT IS USELESS. ARRIVING AT A SOLUTION TO SATISY THE MANY INTERESTED POLITICAL PLAYERS WILL BE HARD, BUT IS IS OBVIOUS THAT DISCONTENT WITH THE PRESENT SYSTEM IS HIGHER NOW THEN IT HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY. THE EXODUS OF FARMERS IS NOT ONLY RESULTING IN CHANGES IN THE FARMING SCENE,IT IS SLOWLY DIMINISHING THE POLITICAL WEIGHT OF THE FARM BLOC IN SOME MEMBER STATES. THE COMBINED EFFORT OF THESE TENDENCIES MAY BE SUFFICIENT TO BRING ABOUT SOME SIGNIFICANT ALTERATIONS IN THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, BUT THE OBSTACLES TO REFORM ARE FORMIDABLE.MYERSON

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